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INDIA'S FIRST PVT LAUNCH PAD GETS READY

SV KRISHNA CHAITANYA @ Chennai

WHILE the country is celebrating the successful launch of Vikram-S rocket, India's first private rocket, another spacetech company from Chennai, Agnikul Cosmos, incubated by IIT-Madras, is quietly building India's first private launch pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota for its maiden rocket launch tentatively scheduled for next month.

"The launch pad work commenced six months ago and is nearing completion. It's a miniature launch facility customised to suit our requirements. Unlike Skyroot, we can't use ISRO's sounding rocket complex or use PSLV/GSLV launch pads due to their sheer gigantic size for our Agnibaan rocket which will use our patented semi-cryogenic engine. We needed a modular launch pad with an umbilical tower to support the vertical launch that we are planning," Srinath Ravichandran, CEO and co-founder, Agnikul Cosmos, told *TNIE*.

ISRO chairman S Somanath said the space agency welcomes private players to build infrastructure, including launch pads, at Sriharikota. "It all depends on the demand. If there is a need for more launch pads, private players are free to synergise. The space reforms introduced in 2020 were not only meant for manufacturing rockets, it can also be for ramping up infrastructure." On why it took considerable time for the launch of Agnibaan, Srinath said "Ours is a completely different technology." P5

VIKRAM-S SOARS WITH THREE PAYLOADS

- India's first private rocket, Vikram-S, was successfully launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Friday
- It carried three payloads from Chennai-based start-up SpaceKidz, Andhra Pradesh-based N-SpaceTech, and Armenian BazoomQ Space Research Lab

ROCKET ACHIEVED ITS PLANNED

Altitude of 89.5 km
Range of 121.2 km

Vikram-S, name of the rocket, is a tribute to Vikram Sarabhai, father of India's space programme

First private rocket launch after space sector was opened for private players by the Centre in 2020

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Voter data theft: EC orders probe by senior IAS officer

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A day after the opposition Congress accused the state government of allowing a private agency to collect voter information and tampering with the data, the Election Commission (EC) on Friday ordered a probe by a senior IAS officer. The Congress, however, insisted on a thorough probe by a Karnataka High Court judge.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Karnataka, Manoj Kumar Meena told The New Indian Express that they have asked Regional Commissioner (RC), Bengaluru Division, Amlan Aditya Biswas to give a factual report on complaints filed by an NGO, KPCC and media reports on the allegations. "In view of the sensitivity and seriousness of the issue, it is felt necessary that a comprehensive investigation is required to be conducted. Hence, you are directed to conduct a detailed inquiry into the matter and send a comprehensive report at the earliest," CEO Meena stated in a letter to the Regional Commissioner.

The CEO's letter cites a complaint by Samanvaya Trust, letters received from the office of Chief Commissioner, BBMP, a complaint received through WhatsApp, and a complaint by the KPCC.

Referring to the complaint received through WhatsApp, the CEO's letter stated: "...it is alleged that a private person has used an identity card to impersonate a Booth Level Officer in Mahadevapura LAC. With regard to the said complaint, the Electoral Registration Officer, 174 Mahadevapura LAC has reported that identity cards were issued to M/s Chilume to work as "Booth Level Coordinating Officer" on 29/01.2022 based on the permission of the DEO (District Election Officer) given to the said institution has made photocopies of the ID cards and written "BLO" with date 09/06/2022 on the cards (sic). With regard to the misuse of permission and ID card, a case has been registered with Whitefield Police station on 15/11/2022." P4

68 VOTERS' NAMES MISSING IN 1 CONSTITUENCY

Sixty-eight names have reportedly gone missing from the voters' list close to the CM's residence in RT Nagar. Close to 68 voters from Rehmanth Nagar and Mathadahalli in RT Nagar alleged that their names were deleted and no officials had come for any 'survey'. P4

Nations that aid terror must pay the price: Modi

'No ifs and buts in dealing with global threat'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

ASSERTING that there can be no 'ifs and buts' in dealing with terrorism, Prime Minster Narendra Modi on Friday tore into countries that are known to support terrorists by offering them political, ideological and financial backing. In a not-so-hidden reference to Pakistan and China, Modi said the rest of the world must come together to impose cost on countries that help terrorists flourish. Organisations and individuals that try to create sympathy for terrorists must also be isolated, he added.

"Certain countries support terrorism as part of their foreign policy," Modi said while addressing the No Money for Terror ministerial conference here on Friday. Delegates from 73 countries and representatives of 15 multilateral organisations are attending the two-day conference being held in Delhi on Friday and Saturday. According to officials, Pakistan and Afghanistan were not invited to the conference. China was invited but no representative from that country turned up.

Money trail

Underlining the need to strike at the root of terror funding, Modi said organised crime needs to be crushed because money made in gun-running, drugs and smuggling is pumped into terrorism

Dwelling at length on the different shades of terrorism, Modi said: "International organisations must not think the absence of war means peace. Proxy wars are also dangerous and violent," adding that the world needs to unite against all kinds of overt and covert backing of terror.

Taking a swipe at China, Modi said some countries make indirect arguments in support of terrorism to block action against terrorists, adding that there should be equal outrage and action against all kinds of terror attacks.

Speaking at the conference, Union home minister Amit Shah opined that financing of terror is more dangerous than terrorism itself. He said terrorists seem to be using cryptocurrency and the darknet to raise money and radicalise youth.

All well in MVA after Raut warns Rahul?

SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI @ Mumbai

HOURS after the Uddhav Thackeray faction of the Shiv Sena warned the Congress that questioning Veer Savarkar's patriotism could result in the break-up of their Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) alliance in Maharashtra, the grand old party sought to douse the fire claiming their coalition was very much intact.

The Uddhav faction has been under pressure from the BJP to react strongly to the insult of Savarkar by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, who raked up his mercy petition to the British Raj, alleging his contribution to the freedom struggle was tainted.

Uddhav Sena's leader Sanjay Raut joined the perception battle by putting the Congress on notice, saying: "We consider Veer Savarkar a reverential figure. If Rahul Gandhi continues to articulate such views against Savarkar, it can break the MVA alliance in Maharashtra."

Hours later, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh claimed the matter had been sorted out after he spoke to Raut. He said both of them agreed that there was no crack in the MVA. Ramesh said in democracy, everyone has a right to hold different views. "We believe in documentary evidence that Savarkar helped the British rulers." He added that the party was not raising it intentionally, but it came in different context.

Lumpy skin disease: 1.44 L cattle infected in 6 months

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

THE fast-spreading lumpy skin disease among cattle is posing a serious challenge to the state government as 1.44 lakh cases have been reported in the last six months, of which one lakh cases were recorded in just one month's time.

Over 11,000 cattle have died so far, farmers are in distress as the milk production has drastically come down and it is getting difficult to put oxen to work in agricultural fields. The RDPR Department has ordered fogging in all Gram Panchayat limits and surrounding areas where lumpy skin disease is detected. At some clusters, milk production has come down by 10 to 20%. The state average of 94 lakh litres of milk production has come down to 90 lakh litres per day.

As per data shared by the Animal Husbandry Department officials, the state recorded 2,070 deaths of cattle between April and October, which increased to 11,031 deaths, indicating a spike in the number of deaths by 9,000 in a span of one month. Of the 1.44 lakh cases detected so far, 61,400 animals are under treatment, which also means recovery rate is only 60 per cent. It can be noted that last month, CM Basavaraj Bommai had convened a meeting in which he had said that the government is giving a compensation of Rs 20,000 for death of a cow and Rs 30,000 for oxen deaths. P5

Anand Teltumbde Gautam Navalkha

ELGAR CASE

BAIL FOR TELTUMBDE

The Bombay High Court on Friday granted bail to activist Anand Teltumbde, arrested in the Elgar Parishad-Maoist links case, noting that prima facie the only case against him relates to alleged association with a terror outfit and support given to it, for which the maximum punishment is 10 years in jail. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court ordered social activist Gautam Navlakha, to be placed under house arrest "without fail" within 24 hours | P9

EXPRESS READ

Chanakya University to be launched today

Bengaluru: Chanakya University, which has already gained a reputation for its plans to adhere to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 with a focus on Indian knowledge systems, is all set to be officially launched in the city on Saturday. P2

India will retaliate if provoked: Rajnath

Udupi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said India does not provoke any country, but it will not spare anyone who tries to disturb its unity and integrity. Singh was speaking at the 30th convocation of MAHE on Friday. He added that India is poised to become the 'number one' economy by 2047. P5

Panel formed for Datta shrine

Bengaluru: The Karnataka State Endowments Department has constituted a managing committee to oversee the rituals at the Guru Dattatreya Bababudan shrine in Chikkamagaluru. The committee has both Hindu and Muslim members. P5

Metro Phase-3 gets CM nod, ball in Centre's court now

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

CHIEF Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Friday gave his approval for Bengaluru Metro's Phase-3 project being built at a cost of Rs 16,328 crore. The project now awaits the Centre's nod.

Rakesh Singh, Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development Department, told TNIE, "The CM has approved Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Limited's (BMRCL) Phase-3 project today (Friday). The Urban Development Department will be sending it to the Centre for its approval, on Saturday. The project received an in-principle approval from the Finance Department a few weeks ago."

The Phase-3 project runs to a length of 44.65 km and covers two corridors, one along West of Outer Ring Road West and the other is via Magadi Road. The state and Central governments will bear 20% of the cost each, while the remaining 60% will be mobilised through external assistance. The estimated cost has been fixed bearing in mind cost escalation for the next five years, said an official release. CONTINUED ON: P2

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